



Bocas ARTS

Video transcript

Why study sponges?

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- I think sponges are fascinating because they are one of the oldest groups of animals on earth.
- There are over 8,500 named species of sponges
- Taxonomists estimate that there are about 5,000 species just sitting on shelves in museums, waiting for a name.
- There are many areas in the world that have not been explored for sponges yet, so there are always new things to find.
- Sponges can use different chemical compounds to inhibit the growth of bacteria on the surface of the sponge or inside of the sponge.
- These compounds can be used to treat human diseases.
- For example, there is one sponge compound that is used to treat psoriasis, or skin infection, another can be used to treat leukemia.
- Another fascinating fact about sponges is that some of them act like plants.
- They contain photosynthetic symbionts that allow them to harvest energy from sunlight.
- Other sponges can host an amazing diversity of bacteria.
- These sponges can host more bacteria than a human gut, so that makes them a great model system for studying complex microbiomes.
- Finally, sponges are beautiful, their shapes and colors add to our enjoyment of the reef environment.



easily accessible taxonomic information